



Romney: It's a "Compliment" to Be Called "Grandfather of ObamaCare"

Despite all his talk of repealing and replacing the misnamed Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney [told an audience](#) September 19 that he takes it as "a compliment" when President Barack Obama calls him "the grandfather of ObamaCare."

Appearing at a Univision "Meet the Candidate" forum, Romney touted his own "experience in healthcare reform." That, of course, would be the 2006 healthcare law that Romney signed into law as governor of Massachusetts. That law mandated that all residents carry health insurance or pay a tax penalty and that insurers not discriminate against individuals with pre-existing conditions. It also set up a state insurance exchange and subsidized insurance premiums for those unable to afford them on their own.



If that sounds like ObamaCare, that's because it is. In fact, Obama specifically modeled his plan on Romney's, even going so far as to consult former Romney advisers about how to take Romneycare nationwide. One of those former advisers, MIT economist Jon Gruber, told [Newsweek](#) that Romney is "the one person who deserves the most credit for the national plan we ended up with." Thus, while Obama was undoubtedly playing politics when he credited Romney with siring the prototype for the Affordable Care Act, he was also telling the truth.

After mentioning his own healthcare-reform credentials, Romney continued: "Now and then the president says I'm the grandfather of ObamaCare. I don't think he meant that as a compliment but I'll take it."

Romney had a bit of a smile on his face, as if he were saying that in jest. Yet the next words out of his mouth indicated otherwise: "This was during my primary; we thought it might not be helpful." In other words, when he had to win the votes of the conservative base of the Republican Party, he felt obliged to pretend that he had nothing at all to do with ObamaCare and, in fact, loathed it. Now that the GOP is stuck with him, he can admit that he really is honored to have had a hand in foisting that unconstitutional monstrosity on the country — no great shock considering he once declared that RomneyCare should be "a model for the nation" and later [urged](#) Obama to use the Massachusetts law as a template for his own.

"I've actually been able to put in place a system that fit the needs of the people of my state," Romney added, "and I'm proud of the fact that in my state, after our plan was put in place, every child has



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insurance, 98 percent of adults have insurance, but we didn't have to cut Medicare by \$716 billion to do that. We didn't raise taxes on health companies by \$500 billion as the president did."

While no one can deny that Bay Staters are among the most insured people in the nation, there is reason to question whether this is, as Romney would have it, a victory for the free market (aided by government mandates). According to [CBS News](#), "Of the 439,000 previously uninsured Massachusetts residents who obtained insurance after the reform became law, 83 percent did through publicly-funded programs, such as Commonwealth Care and MassHealth. Federal Medicaid funds underwrite about half the state's cost."

That is, Romney's great "success" in getting Massachusetts residents insured has come about almost exclusively through government spending, half of which was supplied by Uncle Sam. This is the only reason Massachusetts was able to implement its plan without major tax increases. (The observant reader will recognize a subtle shift in Romney's rhetoric since the Supreme Court ruled that the individual mandate is a tax; Romney now says merely that he didn't hike healthcare business taxes, not that he didn't raise taxes at all.) If this is the prototype for ObamaCare, U.S. taxpayers are in deep trouble.

Romney then went on to explain how he would replace ObamaCare: "We're going to give you the Medicaid dollars you've had in the past, plus grow them with inflation, plus one percent, and you as the states are now going to be given targets to move people towards insurance, and you craft programs that are right for your state."

Here Romney obliquely hinted at the fact that the Massachusetts plan was financed by Medicaid. More importantly, he laid out at least part of his plan to replace ObamaCare: Increase federal healthcare spending and force states to get their citizens insured. Unlike ObamaCare, this, he would have us believe, is constitutional and indeed the very essence of federalism:

The idea of a federal government stepping in, and telling people, here's the kind of insurance you have to have. You don't get the choice of whether you want comprehensive or whether you want catastrophic. The government is going to tell you what you have to have. The government is going to ultimately have a board that tells you what kind of care you can receive. That in my opinion is not the right way to go on healthcare.

The approach that I would propose is one that would give individuals choice as opposed to government choice. That's going to get our people insured and will keep the cost of healthcare from going through the roof as it has been, and I believe it will allow people to continue to have the relationship with their doctor and their provider that they want.

Of course, Romney's approach would simply shift the role of healthcare dictator from Washington to state capitals, which may be somewhat federalist but is still a bad idea. States would mandate that their citizens purchase insurance and — as they already do to a large extent — what that insurance must cover, with Washington (read: taxpayers) footing the bill. Undoubtedly the federal government would establish some basic rules for this insurance, and over time those rules would become just as onerous as those being established under ObamaCare today.

Moreover, this would not, as Romney suggested, "keep the cost of healthcare from going through the roof" or prevent the government from dictating "what kind of care you can receive." Romneycare has done the exact opposite for Massachusetts residents. Per capita health spending in the Bay State is now [27 percent higher](#) than the national average, and insurance premiums are double the national average.



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Costs have gotten so far out of hand that the state recently imposed [price controls](#) on healthcare providers; and to enforce these price controls the legislature created an independent state agency — “a board that tells you what kind of care you can receive.”

Romney, therefore, is wrong to take any pride in being either “the grandfather of ObamaCare” or the father of Romneycare. Just as surely as the latter has reduced liberty and increased healthcare costs and government control over medicine in Massachusetts, so will the former do across the entire country.

Photo of Mitt Romney at Univision “Meet the Candidate” forum: AP Images

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